1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

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TWO DANCERS CRYING OUT TO THE PYTHON.
(*See Section D, Gunabibi Ceremony, page 298.*)

[FRONTISPIECE - FACING p. iii]

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

852 its magical effect, to insure the boys' acquiring many presents on the
777 journey on which they are sent by the older men, and to enable them always to have plenty of good things during their lives. The above quotation is not a formula and is varied according to the speaker.

852 The two boys, with a near relative such as an older dué (sister's husband, father's sister's son), are sent out (at times this does not occur),
574 usually on separate paths, to visit the various relatives and clans to in-
484 vite them to the coming ceremony. The relatives of the boys who are present at the time they are sent away and who belong to outside clans are always desirous that the initiates visit their clans. The father chooses a trail for the boy to follow, but the man who accompanies and protects the boy usually modifies the father's directions to fit the circumstances of the journey.

The neophytes usually stay away a month, but their journey may last two moons, or less than one. If they leave when the moon is full they return when there is a new moon. In later years a man always boasts about the many clans he visited, the great distances he traveled, the long period he was absent on his journey.

The young men are sent away, it is said by the old Murngin men, so that they will meet new people, which is felt to be a good thing, and make lifelong friends among their more distant classificatory relatives. This ritualistic making of friends is not organized among these people as highly as in West Australia, nor does the path followed by the boy occupy as important a place in his later life as it does in West Australian regions.

One Wessel Island boy of the Perango clan went down through Elcho Island, where he visited the clan of that country, through Arnhem Bay and into the country of the Gwiyamil clan.[11] A candidate for initiation from the Wangurri clan went overland to the Barlamomo of Blue Mud Bay.

852 Before leaving, the boys are given new armlets which are then painted
302 with white clay; white cockatoo feather headdresses are put on them,
301 and their faces are daubed with white paint. Usually a white clay bark
291 band is tied around the forehead. Red ocher and kangaroo fat with a white clay outline are put on the boys' faces. A large hair belt, suspended from which is a painted opossum fur string pubic covering, is put on the initiate for the first time. Before this he has gone completely nude, as do all uncircumcised boys.

852 Wherever the boy goes on his journey the people are informed of the
574 coming ceremony and invited to attend. All those who are invited give
431

[11] See the clan and tribal map, page 40.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

that time is represented on the bark tray. The boy is given a piece of kangaroo meat or some other food and an old man says, "That is not kangaroo. You tell me the name of that which you're eating. What is it?" 852 869

An old man sits beside the youth and whispers a totemic name of the animal into the ear of the boy. The boy then calls out this esoteric name as he swallows the food. As he says the totemic name all the men cry out, "Yai!!! yai!!!" The whole list of foods is gone through, the boy eating them and being told the taboo name of each. Even though the food is not represented on the bark tray, its name is told him and another pellet takes the place of the missing edible. During the ritual the little boys are informed that if they impart any of the information they have been given, "something will happen to their mothers," and that the old men will spear them if they inform any of the women or children. They are told that the old men will know by magic if they betray their secrets. All the men insist that a boy would be killed if he gave away the secrets of the men.—When the ritual is finished, the fire and logs are covered with sand and earth, and men and boys return to the main camp. 852 869 626

The newly circumcised boys are kept away from all women and remain with the men until the wound is healed and they can walk and urinate without pain or effort. Then the pubic coverings they have been wearing, the ones in which the women saw them before circumcision, are taken off; a short song is played over them and they are burned, others being placed on the boys to symbolize the change in biological and social status. The boys are watched over most carefully by the men during the entire ceremony, as well as during a period after the circumcision. Some older man is always with them. This attention is given both to keep them away from the women and because it is felt that during a circumcision initiation a boy should have every luxury given him and the best of everything that the group has to offer. 852 [291]

Older boys show greater emotion and expression of pain than the younger ones when they are operated upon. The younger ones stop crying almost immediately after the operation.

3. The older age grade of youths who have been shown the totemic emblem of the python for the first time (see Section F, 4) are put on a vegetable diet for a period determined by the leader of the ceremony, ordinarily about a week. At the end of the period the young men are taken to the men's ceremonial grounds where they are painted by 852 561 262 302

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

The initiates are not allowed to see the rest of this part (N) of the Ulmark. All the older men get up and run to the path that has been excavated in the snake ground; they run inside the path and into the hole. 884

Native Interpretation.—"Two men [the pairs of sitting men] go straight inside the hole we dig for them. That means that the snake has swallowed the two women and is going down the hole." [773]

O. THE CEREMONIAL CAMP IS ENCIRCLED BY FIRE 884

1. The men dance through the fire to the women's ground. They ceremonially wash and put on new raiment. 535

1. Two men paint themselves as darpa (tiger) snakes (Ma-ring-o in the Wangurri tongue, and U-var-ko in the Garl-ba-nuk dialect). One man paints himself to represent the small kangaroo (pardi-pardi). The two snakes squat down at the head end of the triangular excavated snake ground. The kangaroos sit down at the tail end, surrounded by the chorus. Lines of bushes are put on each side of the snakes. The kangaroos dance first. The chorus uses the swinging motion of the trunk described on page 321, and sings the taboo names of the kangaroo. After the snakes have danced, the men leave the ceremonial grounds and return to the women's camp. When the snake and kangaroo episode occurs, the neophytes are shown the excavation and instructed in the mythology for the first time. [302]

The women now make a fire that follows the path made by them earlier in the Ulmark (see Section G 4), which completely surrounds the men's ceremonial camp. The fire moves in toward the men. The women return to their own camp. The men paint themselves and all their possessions with red ocher. They shave and cut their hair to give themselves a "new" appearance. The women in camp also paint themselves and all their possessions, also to make them look "new." The men come out of their ceremonial ground and through the fire to the main camp. They dance out into the water and wash themselves, as do the women. When the men and women come back, they take kangaroo grease and red ocher and paint themselves. They put on a new white headband, freshly painted arm bands, a new hair belt, and a new pubic covering. 884 392 [291]

Native Interpretation.—"That fire is all the same as the two women made to cook the animals that ran away. [It is also the snake, and the snake's tongue.] The path is Muit." 884 773

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

may be possible that Malay influence brought the final elaboration which formed the gabled superstructure. The pile house is never used in the water and is found only on raised ground. The native explanation of why the more eastern parts of the Murngin country do not possess the mosquito house is that there are not so many mosquitoes here and the ordinary hut with the fire in front works better than the mosquito house. It is probably true, since the morasses of the Goyder and Glyde Rivers breed more mosquitoes than any other part of the country.

Another type of shelter found in the north is the stone cave dwelling. Dwellings of this type are used during the wet season in the lonely hill country in the interior, on Wessel Island, and sporadically around Buckingham Bay.

2. Articles That Are Worn

Although the nights of the dry season are at times quite cold, no clothing has been invented or borrowed by these people, as were kangaroo skin cloaks farther south.

It has been said that need does not produce invention, and the Australian black has been pictured as an example of this theory. Such criticism is colored by the prejudices of our own social standards. The days in Arnhem Land are always warm. No clothes are needed for comfort. The occasional cold nights are made comfortable by windbreaks and small fires built to produce ample warmth. In other words, instead of using one of our methods, the Australian has utilized a different invention to combat the cold. During the rainy season clothes are a hindrance rather than a help.

It has been asserted further that the black lacked the intelligence to invent clothes, since as soon as he came in contact with white civilization he donned the habiliments of Caucasian culture. He has, around white settlements where native civilization has disappeared, adopted the clothing of western civilization, but this is not so much an adoption by his own culture of an element of white civilization to meet his needs, as a more or less complete abandonment of his own material culture and his adoption of the white men as his master and the white men's culture as his own. The wearing of clothing has done more harm, destroyed more natives, made the aborigine far less adapted to his natural surroundings in the north, than has almost any other element of white culture. His naked condition before the coming of the white man was far more appropriate to the country he lived in.

String.—String is basic to most of the articles worn by the Murngin. All string, composed of only two strands, is made of vegetable or animal fiber: the inner bark of certain trees (the hibiscus, in particular), the inner bark of their roots, and opossum fur or human hair. The string of vegetable matter is usually fine and carefully twisted, while the other is loosely woven

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

301 237 *Fish-vertebrae Necklace.*—The vertebrae of the larger fish, including sharks, are cleaned, bored, covered with red ocher, and strung on a strand of fiber string which is tied tightly around the neck. These necklaces are worn by all members of the tribe on any occasion.

291 *Human-hair Belts.*—The Murngin wear a belt or band made of human hair which fits tightly across the upper portion of the buttocks and around the sides as far as the hip bones, where strings are attached and tied in front of the pubic hair. There are two types, a bundle or cylindrical one, and a flat or sewn variety. One continuous human hair string about fifty to sixty feet long is looped back and forth and the end of the bunch of loops wrapped for one-half inch with fiber string or human hair. The belt has a norm of about twenty-two inches, which varies from twelve to twenty-four inches. It has about fifty-five strands in it, but varies from twenty-four to sixty-five. Frequently the opossum pubic covering is attached to this belt, although usually it is worn by itself. A single small loop may be left at each end to which the fiber string for tying is attached.

The flat type of belt is made with one continuous string looped about thirty times. Vegetable fiber or human hair string is tied about each end of the bundle, which is flattened by stitching with bands of fiber string at about three-inch intervals. This allows the belt to fit snugly against the buttocks of the wearer and across the small of the back.

292 Ceremonial human hair belts are made by wrapping red parrot feathers over each of the strands in the belt to form a solid layer of red. The wrapping material is pandanus leaf. These belts are always made from the hair [765] of dead persons, which limits the size of the belt. The strands varied, in the [784] few examined, from six to twelve in number. This belt is only worn on ceremonial occasions and no woman may see it, even though it is made from the hair of either men or women.

291 301 *Pubic Aprons.*—The pubic apron, usually of opossum fur string, is less an item of clothing than an article of adornment. Although it is an expression of the people's modesty, it is classed with necklaces and bracelets rather than as a covering for the genitalia. It is composed of a basal strand and a fringe. The basal strand is usually of fiber string, but occasionally human hair is used. The fringe is made of one continuous strand of opossum fur looped about the basal cord. Each loop is twisted into a two-ply tassel, which is about ten inches long for men and five to six inches for women. The ends of the basal strand are tied in a large knot to keep the loops from slipping off. The apron is attached to a belt.

285 *Baskets.*—Since all baskets are carrying baskets equipped with carrying-strings, they also have been placed in the category of things worn.

All basketry in this district is made by the twining technique. The inner layer of the pandanus leaf and water-lily fiber are the two materials used. The latter is found only in the open-work type of basket, while the former is generally used for the tightly woven mesh, and occasionally also for the

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

Ainmaras.—These native artifacts serve as a woman's article of apparel, a mat to sit on, a sunshade, and a mosquito and fly net. All of the uses except the first, which is primary, are employed by both men and women. 285

The ainmara is made of the inner bark of the pandanus with the twining technique. When open it looks like the bottom of a large basket, and when folded like a quarter section of a circle; it is ordinarily twenty inches long and thirty-six inches at its greatest width. The folded ainmaras are a constant equipment of women.

Sometimes the warp is left as a six-inch fringe around the edge of the ainmara.

The half-circle variety of the ainmara (twenty-six and one-half inches by thirty inches) cannot be used for a sunshade or mosquito and fly net. Both are sometimes decorated with overstitched lines of pandanus fiber or human hair string. [531]

Ainmaras are made by both men and women, but usually by women. [462] The woman starts at the center and gradually widens it as she continues her twining. The enlarging surface is kept smooth and even by placing the mat on the sand and rubbing it with a smooth flat stone.

A small fiber string loop is put into the point of the folded ainmara and a woman carries it on her arm at the elbow or by holding it in her hand. [482] Most of the women wear no pubic coverings and when a strange man approaches the camp they cover their pudenda with the ainmara. [291 834] Sometimes a woman's modesty affects her in such a way that she hides her face rather than her pubic parts.

During the midday siesta men and sometimes women open the ainmara and double the body up beneath it to keep the flies off and protect themselves from the direct rays of the sun. During the sand-fly and mosquito months the ainmaras are used to keep off these insects.

3. Weapons

Spear-thrower (Mang-el)

The type of spear-thrower used by the Murngin and natives of northeastern Arnhem Land has a general distribution in Australia from the Kimberleys of West Australia to the southern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The particular variety of this weapon found among the Murngin reaches the Daly River in the west and south, the Katherine River, also in the south, and east to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Groote Eylandt people possess a modification of the mangel type of spear-thrower. The Kimberley variety, although belonging to the same general type as the Murngin, is larger and is made of a different kind of material from that found among the Arnhem Land natives. 411 171

The length of the mangel ranges from thirty-four to thirty-nine inches, with a norm of three feet. It is made of a hard wood of medium weight 411

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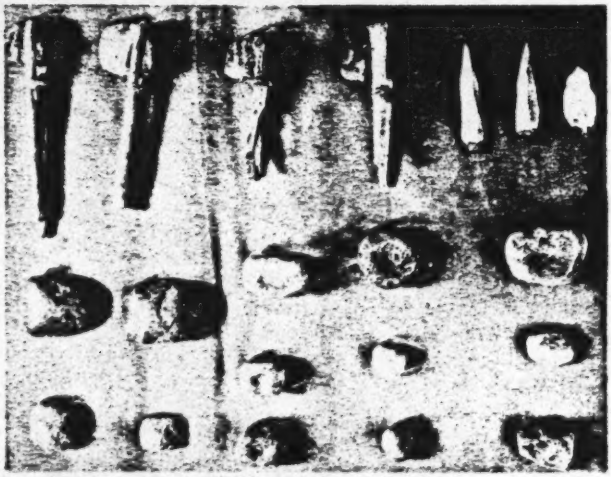

Ia. *Top left:* Hafted Stone Axes.
Top right: Stone Knives (or Spear Heads).
Middle and lower left: Unhafted Axes.
Middle and lower right: Grinding Basins and Mullers.

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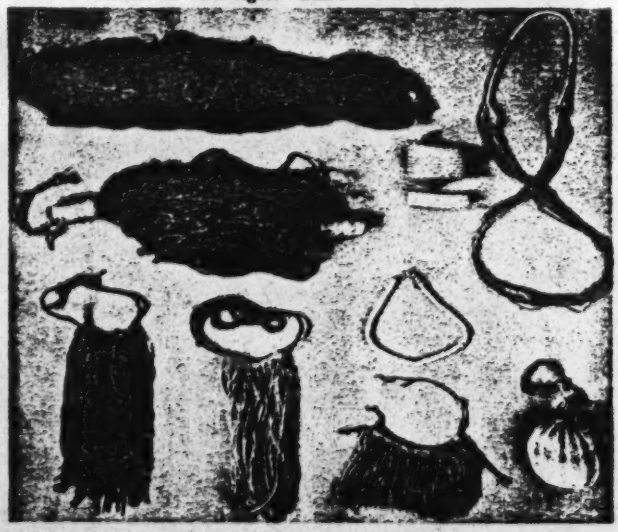

Ib. *Upper left:* Two Hair Belts.
Lower left: Two Men's Pubic Coverings.
Lower middle: One Woman's Pubic Covering.
Upper right: Armlets and Women's "Harness."
Extreme lower right: Spirit Bag.
Left center: Necklace of Fish Vertebrae.

[p. 558 A]

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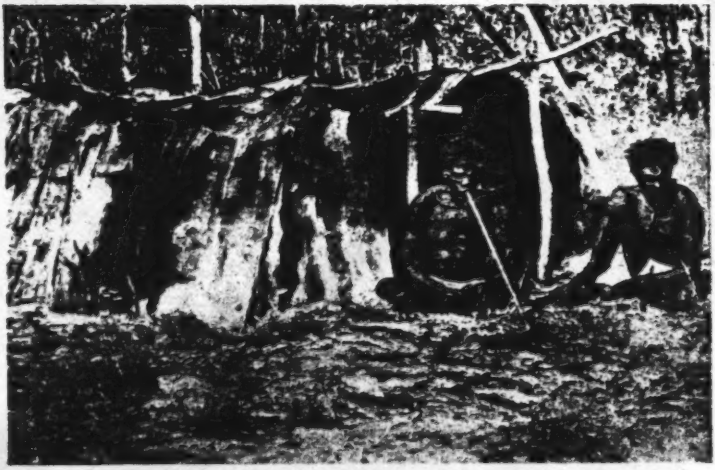

PLATE 3A. Wet-season bark hut, Arnhem Land

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PLATE 3B. Painting a design on bark, Oenpelli

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PLATE 97. Totem places, Jalboa

A The turtle rock, Al-aika
B Totem rocks of turtle carapace
C Totem rock of canoe
D Totem rocks of dismembered turtle

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OIU7 Murngin OIU7

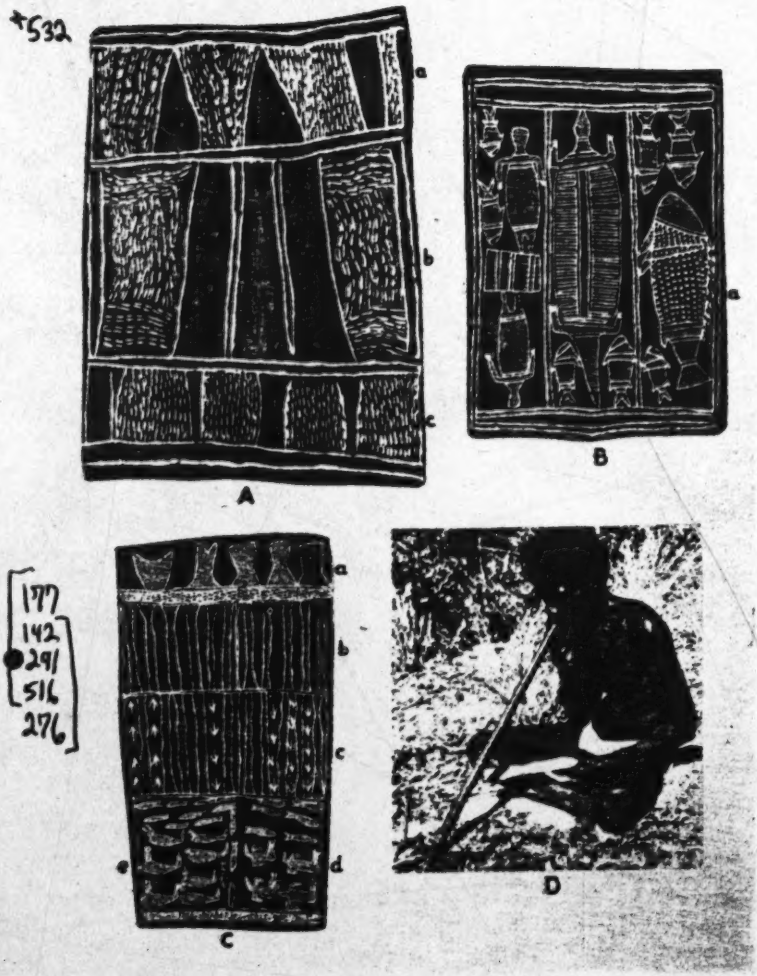

PLATE 124. Bark paintings, Yirrkalla

A The man, Boriota, at Barralumba B Port Bradshaw C A mangrove swamp
D An aboriginal smoking a Malay pipe

The figure wears around its head a "bulkowalku ornament, and on its body a *'maitga*, the red-ochred jungle-string girdle which young girls often wear for decoration and for "strengthening" the breasts. A string pubic apron (*'mudpu*) is also worn, but more for decoration than for actual covering.

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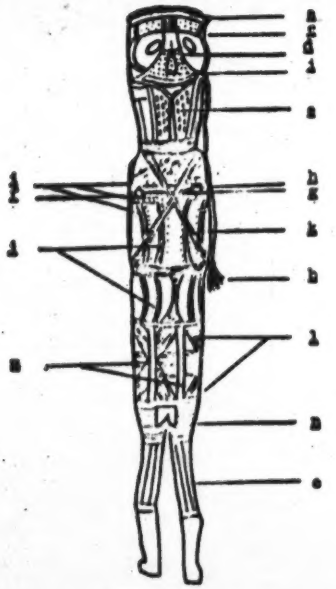

Text-figure A.

The text-figure A, which is a rough sketch of the *'Wawulak* figure in Plate I, figure 1, is a guide to the meaning of the pattern.

- *a* *'bulkowalku* head ornament, made of jungle-string fibre into which have been woven seagull down and parakeet feathers; the terminating pendant (*b*) is of wild-honey wax and seagull feathers.
- *c* the head-band, called *'marɔpipi*, *'kalamba*, or *'warambalu*.
- *d* *'gu:lgul*, outline of cheek or groove between nose and eye.
- *e* the *'dayɔra* flower of the *'du:rilji* gum tree, associated with the *'Wawulak* in the song cycles.
- *f* small swelling breasts, *'diligin'wirlkul*.
- *g* breast or chest ridge, *'gumul* or *'kalmalki*.
- *h* cicatrization.
- *i* small scars called *'kapu:wu:pu*, or "water painting," from the rain made by the python (see myth).

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[for captions, see category 116, p. x]

PLATE II

[Facing p. xxxii]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

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[291]

[For caption see category 116, p. X]

PLATE III

[facing p. 1]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

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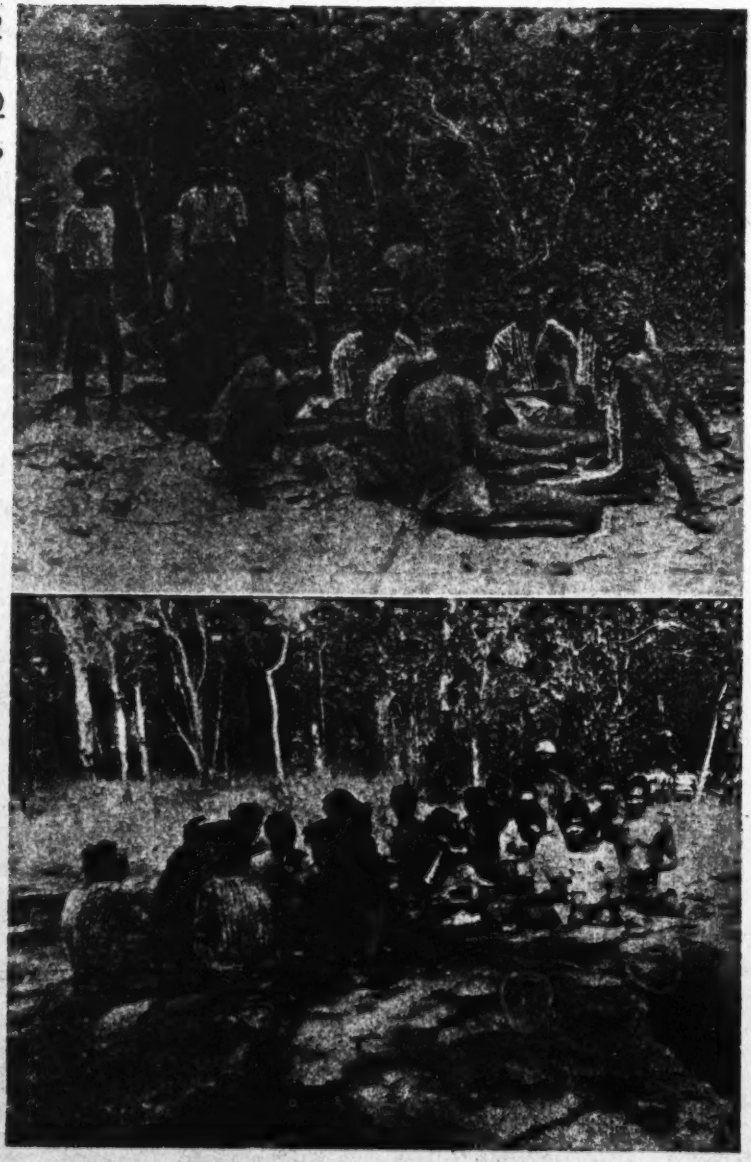

PLATE V.

[Facing p. 33]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

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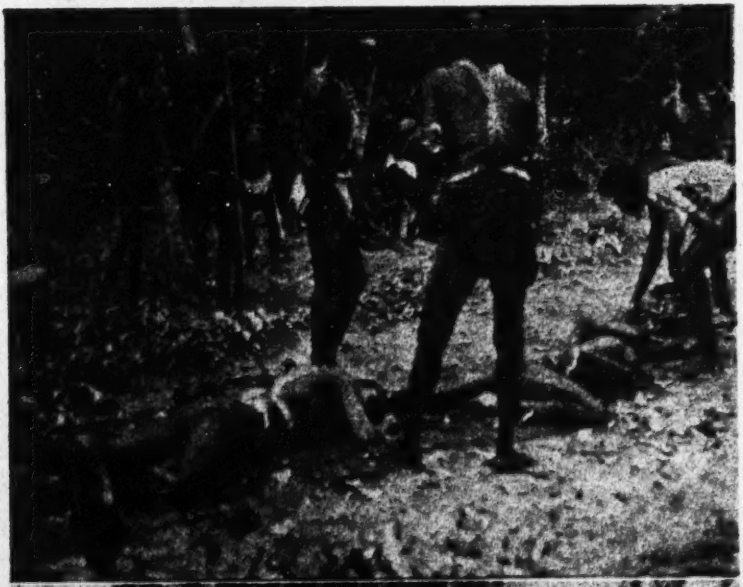

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[Facing p. 64] PLATE VI
[For caption see category 116, p. xi]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

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PLATE VII

[Facing p. 65]

[For captions, see category 146, p. xi]

159 787 796 "We, that is Mo:ra (a *dua* Dadawi *mata*, Kapin *mala* man), Mo:ra's young brother (dead), some other *dua* men, and I 'walked' (along *a* in text figure 8), paused, and shook the branches tied to our forearms; we went on into the *kanala*, and huddled together. While in there, we called out twice; then we came out, and stood alongside the *kanala* (at *b*).

"Then we returned to the main camp and slept.

"Next morning, we went back to the sacred ground and the *kanala*, and re-decorated ourselves with blood and feather down. Then we 'took' new 'spring' water dancing, and came into the main part of the ground (along *a*), shaking our branches, and 'going inside' the *kanala*. We sang out from in there, and emerged (at *b*). Then we danced the Lightning Snake and the Yellow Snake, going into the *kanala* each time. When we had finished these, we rested.

"After that we walked down the 'road' (or trench, at *c*), until we reached a group of *jiritja* men standing round the *jelmalandji*. All the *jiritja* moved back (to *a*) and 'took' opossum dancing; they came (down *a*) and began to dance around the *kanala*, 'rubbing it out so nobody could see'. They kept on dancing until it was completely covered, and then went over and stood by the *jelmalandji*.

159 787 796 881 "They carried the *jelmalandji* over to what had been the *kanala*, and placed one at each end, standing them upright in the ground (as in the lower part of the illustrated text figure marked 2). All the young boys who were initiates were then brought on to the ground; the *dua* boys, *muru*, came in one bunch, and the *jiritja* boys, *wari* (or *warli*), came in another bunch. They were placed on one side (the convex side) of the *kanala*, and told to lie down as if they were asleep: men covered them with blankets. They had not seen the *jelmalandj* when they were brought in, for their guardians had their hands held over the boys' eyes.

"Then we sang for a while and danced, until our singing changed: I was leading the singing, beating on my sticks. We threw off the boys' coverings, and told them to look up at the *jelmalandji*. We showed them these sacred posts, and sang and danced all night till just before sunrise. When the sun was getting up, we opened our veins again and let out blood. And this blood we smeared all over the boys' bodies, and over the men. Then we put *marapipi* bands on their foreheads. We smeared more blood over the boys.

[291] "We undid their *nugu* (loin cloths) and put bark-fibre from the *durangulp* 'coffee' tree around their waists, and branches of green leaves in front like a pubic apron. We plucked *malpi*, ironwood tree, branches and tied them on the boys' arms at the elbows and shoulders, on their thighs and on their legs below the knees. We sang over them as we do in the Kunapipi.

"When they were all ready, we took them to the *djepalmani* (that is, *djepalmandji*) that had been erected on the edge of the main camp,

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

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PLATE X

[p. 84(A)]

[For captions, see category 116, p. xii]

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

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1. Postulants emerge from the sacred shade, carrying emblems.

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2. Embracing the *rangga* emblems on the sacred ground.

[Facing p. 16]

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

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27. Dancing with the *jiritja* moiety *rangga*.

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28. Neophytes await the showing of the Djanggawul emblems.

[p. 92(I)]

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

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Plate 3: Wonggu at Yirrkalla

[Facing p. 21]

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

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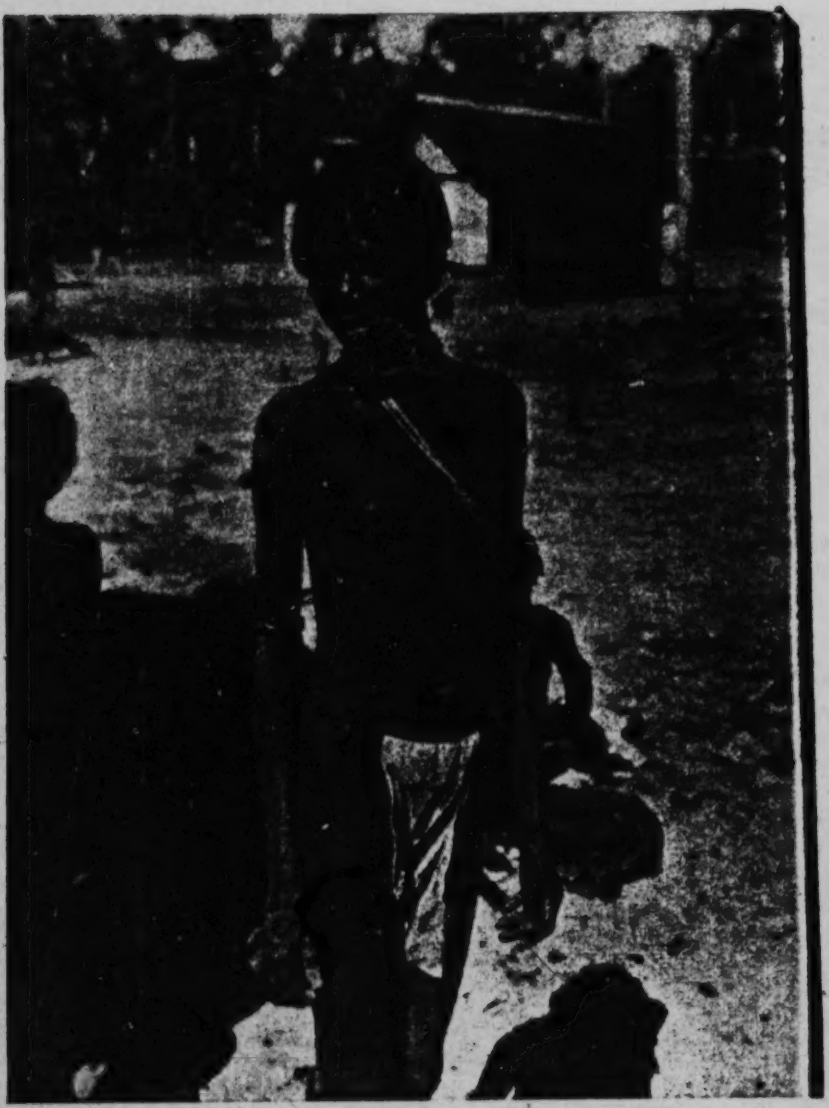

Plate 11: Bulaninda at Yirrkalla; daughter of Dagiar (Tuckiar).

[p. 25(H)]

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OII7 Murngin OII7

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Plate 2. The family is the unit of social life and lives a more or less independent existence within the horde. A man of Blue Mud Bay with his wives and young children. The breakwind of boughs is the only form of shelter used at night during most of the dry season.

[facing p. 42]

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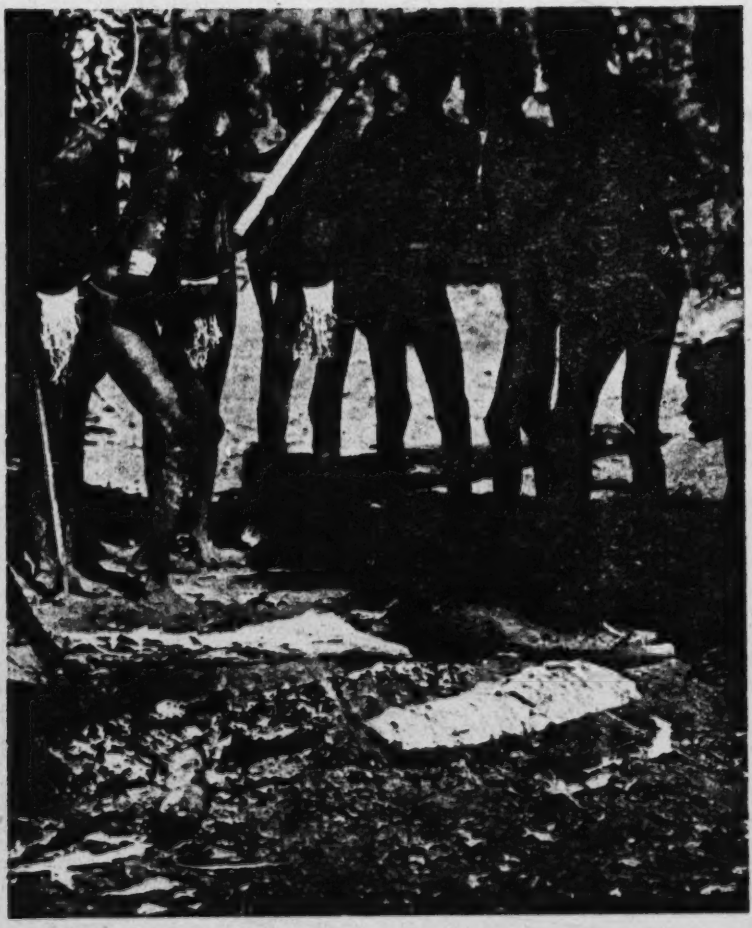

Plate 3. Ceremonial dedication of ŋätu (wrapped in tea tree bark), by the Dälkärramirri who recites over it the "big" or sacred names of the appropriate totem and so converts it into sacramental food.

[Facing p. 43]

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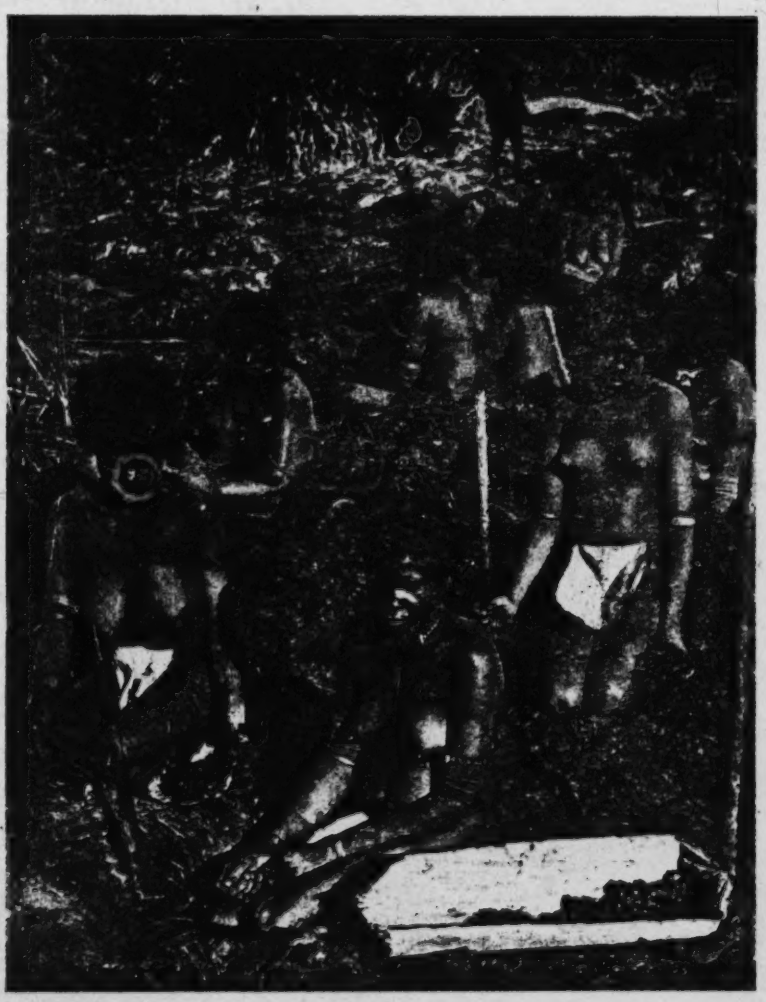

The woman is the provider of the vegetable food, which forms the chief food supply.

Plate 9. Women of Blue Mud Bay with their yam sticks, gathering corms of the Tall Spike Rush (*Heleocharis sphacelata*), which, for several months towards the end of the dry season, is one of the staple foods.

[p.58(D)]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

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LANDFALL

Two Yulengor families in their dug-out canoes

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ARNHEM LAND BEACH

Imported cattle near Yirrkala station

[facing p6]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

134 humus are swept into the swamps or out to sea. The residue
132 from this fierce erosion is the typical clay, gravel, and stone of Arnhem Land. Nevertheless, with the first cloudbursts, the harassed country makes an astounding recovery. In an
137 incredibly short time a thick growth of high coarse grass
136 covers the rocky hills and sandy valleys, yams spring to life on gravel slopes, and animal and bird life is rejuvenated; red kangaroos, agile wallabies, opossums, mice, snakes, goannas, emus, jungle fowls, ducks, geese, spoonbills, herons, brolgas, and many more in kind grow fat and lazy from the
132 lavish hand of nature. But the vicious circle is not to be avoided. Winds swing back to the south-east and the nightmare of poverty again creeps over the land.

123 Exploring in the north-east brought us into contact with most of the scattered hordes so frequently referred to as the 'Killers of Arnhem Land'. In early September we were in the English Company's Islands, with the crew on the look-out for Yulengor; and when they saw a thin column of smoke on a beach, conjecture was rife as to who was in the camp. A dozen men and boys paddled out in their big dug-out canoes and came aboard somewhat diffidently. However, they were soon squatting round the hatch exchanging news with the crew, all the time passing the one
[276] and only bush pipe backwards and forwards and drawing deeply the first tobacco smoke they had tasted for months. Most of them were strong and well developed, with bushy hair, but not too clean. As a concession to the white man
[291] they had donned strips of bark on string waistbands. They were reserved, but interested in all we did, and gladly accepted a couple of tomahawks, wire for fish-spears, and fish-hooks.

628 After the visitors had cast-off in their canoes, a crew-boy
684 mentioned that our visitors had just returned from killing a
682 man in revenge for the death of another in the hills behind our anchorage. It was a long story of intrigue and murder,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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beast represented a potential feast. Tailing stock, and protecting them from dingoes whilst they grazed, was a foreign idea to Stone Age hunters, and if they were not watched, they would build each day a rough brushwood yard in the bush to prevent the stock wandering off for grass and water. Meanwhile the herdsman slept in the shade, and at sundown he brought the animals back to the station yards.

With two hundred nomads on the station, a simple system of sanitation was soon necessary. In the bush they never bother about this, for they live in small hordes, and camp in one place only long enough to eat the meagre food supply, and then move elsewhere. I have never seen Yulengor deliberately wash themselves, but they are so often in the water after fish or crossing creeks and swamps, that they do sometimes get wet. Their cleansing agents are sand and ashes in which they sleep and lounge, and these are fairly effective in removing body moisture and dirt. The predominating acrid odour in their hair, dillybags, and shelters comes mostly from the blinding smoke in which they cook, eat, and sleep.

Unfortunately most nomads take too readily to wearing left-off clothes. We did all we could to control the craze, and issued free soap and a yard of brightly coloured cloth to the men, and short skirts to the women. Our chief objection to the use of clothing is that it is passed from one to another, never washed, and when wet is allowed to dry on the body, thereby causing colds and pneumonia. Bush Yulengor wear nothing unless it be an occasional piece of bark or bunch of leaves attached to a waist-string. But when traders and adventurers introduced coloured cloth, blankets, and left-off clothing, they were eagerly acquired as ornaments, passed from one to another, worn till they fell to pieces, and except for accidental immersion, were never washed. Strange clothes have been seen, as when a man was seen in camp dressed in lady's floral Japanese pyjamas

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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bartered from a passing lugger. In church, the situation got out of control when a bearded nomad came in dressed only in a lady's pair of waist-to-knee pink drawers acquired in Darwin and bartered for over five hundred miles.

With refreshing independence older Yulengor remained aloof from the fashion of wearing clothes. Daughters of Wonggu, the husband of twenty-odd wives and father of many children, advised him to don a covering, but he naïvely remarked: 'Why should I wear clothes? There's nothing wrong with me; I have nothing to hide.' He walks about as Nature made him, except for two strands of bush string tied round his waist. When I asked him why he wore the string, he told me it was for chronic back-ache.

It seemed only reasonable at Yirrkala to preserve Yulengor culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies, and to stimulate in the people an appreciation of their own social organization which often has suffered from alien contact. It is unjust for any alien to come amongst primitive people for the purpose of upsetting their mode of life and converting them to living and thinking as he does; and there is no one so pathetic as a detribalized aboriginal. He is adrift from his own society and cannot fully enter into the alien social life he apes. However, it is not to be expected that all the Yulengor customs are harmless and worthy of a place in their social life; some practices lend themselves to development, but others, such as infanticide, have nothing to be said in their favour. The birth of twins is rare, but if it occurs, the mother or a relative kills one at birth or soon afterwards. We were told that one of twins in a Yirrkala camp was to be killed, and upon inquiry learned that superstition was the driving force behind the custom. It is true that in the bush a mother can scarcely feed herself and one child, and that if she has two infants then at least three lives are endangered; so it seems probable that infanticide was introduced in past ages because of economic necessity. But as time went on,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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SHELL MIDDEN

An experimental cut was made into a shell midden beside an old Yulengor camp

[facing p 70]

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FOOD GATHERERS

Women and children setting out to search for food

[facing p 71]